

MINUTES FOR July 15, 2008
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: Alyce Ortuzar; Sylvia Morrison, MCPS; Larry Cole for Charles Kines, MNCPPC; Alan Migdall; Lt. Ronald Smith, MCPD Traffic Division; John Britton, Maryland Municipal League; Bill Frick, Chairman; Bill Bronrott, Vice Chairman; John Howley; Steve Friedman; Erwin Mack; Ken Hartman, B-CC Regional Service Center; Ben Stutz for Councilmember Valerie Ervin

Members Absent: Art Holmes, Linda Katz, Gerald Donaldson

County Staff: Tom Pogue; Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator; Andrea Turner, TEOS; Al Roshdieh; Deputy Chief; Fred Lees

Guests: Richard Hoyer; William Smith; James D'Andrea (MCPS-Northwest High School);

Agenda Items:

1. Introductions
2. Committee Business
3. Measurements: Survey of Pedestrian Perceptions
4. Update on county Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative
5. Status of new State Safe Routes to Schools Grants
6. Other Pedestrian Safety Activities
7. Committee comment/Issue follow –up/Open discussion/ identification future topics
8. Adjourn

Item: 1. Introductions

Introduction to DOT's new Pedestrian Safety Coordinator

Jeff Dunckel

Jeff Dunckel introduced himself – he started the County in 1990 working in solid waste recycling programs – 1998 moved to transit. In Transit, focused on ped safety – worked on blue ribbon panel put together program to upgrade transit passenger facilities. In the process, built good relationship with Fred Lees and traffic engineers. He will do a short presentation on what has been done in past couple years. Have worked with state officials – applied for job because of history of working on safety issues for pedestrians/passengers.

New name for the committee, under enabling legislation – Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. Traffic safety includes bicycle and pedestrians. Will need to update contact sheet for committee changes/additions. Passed sheet around for updating on contact info.

Reimbursement forms were distributed in meeting packet that was distributed – please use these to submit requests for reimbursements. It is something offered by county – expense related to attending meetings are covered.

Committee is now recruiting for new committee members, including incumbents w/ terms expiring. Interviews will be held next month.

Draft Minutes from May's meeting were distributed. Any comments should be emailed to Tom Pogue or Dunckel. He will give you a week to review then they will be posted on the website and placed in the Rockville Library. Dunckel is updating the ped safety website; because of reorganization we have two parallel ped sites so should be revised and consolidated in the next few weeks.

Tom Pogue described the MCDOT reorganization; materials describing the reorganization were handed out. MCDOT focusing on moving people whether walking, biking, riding transit, or driving a car – no change in that mission.

Comments from Chairman Frick

Del. Bill Frick will not be reapplying as a member – personal reasons – in different place now in life – now have 2 jobs and 2 kids – ped safety issues are in a different place - - now feel confident in where it is going. As a member of general assembly he can continue being an advocate on pedestrian issues in Annapolis. Pogue stated the Committee values Frick's support over the years and look forward to his support in Annapolis - - so thank you for both commitments. On next meeting agenda – need to add selecting a chair – it is a decision by CE but we recommend a new chair. Let's give thought and explore how this committee has selected chairs in past. Bill – “I volunteered; I was the only volunteer.” If you are interested in being a chair please contact Dunckel..

Discussion of alternate meeting locations – something we were thinking about, especially considering the recruitment effort for membership – CE wants diversity – there are concerns for people who don't drive and live in different parts of county using transit or walking places instead of driving. Thought we might change location some months. Just letting you know this is an option we are thinking about down the road. This location is close to transit. This current conference room may be too small. Please let MCDOT know if you have any ideas on where we might meeting alternatively. Erwin – any size restrictions to the committee? Pogue – 17 – in your packet is the code describing who is on the committee.

Item: 2 Committee Business

Recruitment and process for applying to committee: Dunckel described County's efforts to find someone from Hispanic community. MCDOT reopened advertising in June and we have Alan has reapplied and Erwin is offering to serve another term. We have two vacancies to fill – Linda Katz and Bill Frick – we have 10 applicants currently and will do interviews end of month. We need committee members to participate in the interview process.

We are going to make recommendation when council comes back from summer recess. We will interview and recommend people in priority. Incumbents are being recommended for approval, but that is ultimately the County Executive's decision on whether to approve the recommendations. There will be annual process next year advertising again, hopefully earlier – December/January. It's simple to apply: send email expressing your interest and qualifications.

Subcommittees: Dunckel reported that they are in middle in preparing draft strategic plan then they'll start thinking about subcommittees to support these efforts.

Steering committee: Pogue reported MCDOT was looking to form a steering committee to help us deal with issues between departments – we have a coordination role in MCDOT's new capacity – working with departments, including departments beyond executive office, like schools. It is like a board of directors – 3 purposes – to assist Art and Al in directing ped safety program for dot, 2nd to ensure responsibility for implementing these measures and 3rd resolve major policy issues.

First meeting was held in early June and we talked about the purpose and funding level that the County has in general. Through the same presentation we discussed some issues – with data – county stat wanting us to be data driven – make decisions on where we go on ped safety investments on what is and is not working. Have an issue there is a set of data from police – collision, then from fire and rescue on calls they go out on – and other data – it all needs to be reconciled. The steering committee will also be considering the ped safety strategic plan. Tomorrow we have 2nd meeting of the steering committee – work in progress so we will update them on how we are doing on strategic plan and their role in the process.

Alyce Ortuzar – Regarding the strategic plan people talked about the CE’s press conference on ped safety and proposed new projects – when they review what has been done and what has been proposed they couldn’t see what had been done, what had been funded, and what was newly proposed. Is there a way of having a layout as to what Mr. Leggett has proposed in his press conference and what has actually been funded and distinguish between old and new projects.

Pogue responded that what Mr. Leggett proposed was beyond what was already being done – we can show you a pamphlet of all the things in the original proposal and what was funded this year at least. In FY09, only High Incidence Areas received funding – \$800,000 for work in high incidence areas will be highly monitored. Sidewalks were deferred until 2011. Alan Migdall pointed out that it was helpful to know and clearly define what was funded, and what was not, and what the thinking was behind what was and wasn’t funded.

Dunckel stated the CE Initiative didn’t do such a good job defining what was already being done in Pedestrian Safety. The \$30 million people refer to was all the activities that were already underway that improved pedestrian safety – Arcola Ave. traffic calming was in the works over 2 years ago, before the CE’s Initiative was developed. We need to do a better job of defining what is happening under current funding and what is newly proposed under the CE’s Ped Safety Initiative.

Item: 3 Measurements: Survey of Pedestrian Perceptions

Complete Streets Audit for Pedestrian Safety

William Smith

Dunckel introduced William Smith, citing the need to measure not only crash data, but peoples’ perceptions of safety when walking and biking. The Implementation Group was told of Bill Smith’s efforts in Silver Spring to conduct a citizen survey of Silver Spring neighborhood roadways, to define which of those were perceived to be the most dangerous. Bill Smith is here to describe the work his group did in Silver Spring.

Smith expressed his view that pedestrian safety is also a matter of accessibility - - making our roads accessible for all the public, including those with disabilities. He is blind and has no car. . . so accessible pathways for walking is hugely important. Silver Spring is filled with obstacles and impediments to walking, especially if you are in a wheelchair or pushing a stroller. This has been his issue since 1997. He has had some success and some failures in getting things fixed. Organized the early walk to school days, and got Bill Bronrott to sponsor legislation designating walking the State exercise. Created a website called “Montgomery Sideways,” which documents bad pedestrian problems. He has mostly focused on trying to get his neighbors to pressure government to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. As he became aware of the concept of “Complete Streets,” he explored the idea of using **community assessment tools** to define what a problem was for pedestrians. This survey tool was put together by the “Active Living Resource Center,” working with the University of Oregon. Originally used in the Safe Routes to School program to assess student pedestrian pathways to schools. Walkability surveys were loaded onto PDAs for the purpose of conducting field assessments of road conditions. Using list serves and contacts with Blair High School and the East Silver Spring Civic Association, eighteen people eventually volunteered to take the PDAs with the surveys loaded and go out and survey neighborhood roadways.

Smith narrated a slide show displaying the survey activities of the eighteen volunteers. The survey was conducted on June 7, 2008. They were organized into 8 teams of two. Training of volunteers was conducted by the University of Oregon. In less than four hours of surveying, these volunteers brought in information on 102 intersections and street segments. They filled out information from the pedestrian’s point of view, the transit user’s point of view, and the bicyclists point of view. Upon returning, the information was downloaded into computer, and maps displaying results was completed before the end of the day – providing immediate results. Examples were distributed in the meeting packets.

These results are now being analyzed. Some of the data is a little rough. But one early conclusion is that citizens will volunteer to conduct assessments of their roadways. If a group of community volunteers can put something like this together, than surely a County Government can do something like this. This survey was a pilot. The hope is it can have wider application in the County, learning from this experience.

Much discussion ensued. Additional discussions pertain to how response MCDOT has been to citizen reports and complaints. Ken Hartman and Tom Pogue described the 311 system being developed to track complaints and requests.

Item: 4 Update on county Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative

Actions planned for first HIA – Piney Branch

Fred Lees

First HIA – we have been working with consultant who has submitted scope cost estimate we have signed off – we are starting the first audit along piney branch road and have scheduled a scoping meeting with consultant and hwy – prior to the actual audit – to make sure we have the limits set and exactly what we are going to look at – then we'll put together an audit team after the school year starts – around end of September early October to conduct audit – a two day all day – not all of piney branch portion of flower to university – but may go to county line. We are proceeding and are looking to begin 2nd audit shortly after– 4 audits in a fiscal year.

Plans on implementing Ped Safety Initiative - next 6 months

Jeff Duncel

We want to do measurement parameters too – we also have a lot of activities ongoing such as Arcola, Flower avenue, and one things we are concerned we don't want to chill the other ped activities because we don't have good measurements in – what measurement parameters should we be using so we can demonstrate we had some meaningful results. Strategic plan available for discussion in couple months.

Item: 5 Status of new State Safe Routes to Schools Grants

Status of Filling Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator Position

Tom Pogue

we have applied repeatedly to Safe Routes to Schools funding state – 23 grants – a received funding and council approved supplemental now advertising position- if you know of any one let me know go to website and apply.

\$145,00 for Grant A; have letter approval for Grant B \$340, 000 pays coordinator and engineering and enforcement for 11 selected schools – we are going to go in and make investments improvements to make walking safer, \$240,000 for Grant C for another 6 more schools and continue in funding of coordinator – have funds till 2010.

Item: 6 Other Pedestrian Safety Activities

World Remembrance Day/Pedestrian Vigil Event-Nov.13

Tom Pogue

We did vigil last November at Temple of Emanuel after woman was killed crossing the street to the temple - it is an international event that is put on to commemorate people who are killed in traffic accidents – motorists and pedestrians. We are planning following up to this one this November– we need help – in planning committee you are invited to attend meeting at end of this month. 2nd area need help as we get closer is publicizing through your listserve and other ways to get the word out to the community. Esther bower will be talking to you at September meeting about this.

Steve Friedman also spoke about a “Ride of Silence” for bicyclists in May, commemorating cycling fatalities.

Walk to School train the trainer program**Sylvia Morrison**

As a principle – thank you for your support – we are driven by the fact we need support in promoting safety to students. We are participants of your support – will follow through what we did – Mr. James D’Andrea will attend in my place for future meetings.

In March we had consultants train a group of 19 student ambassadors – who then turned around and trained all 152 2nd graders in pedestrian safety – and had great support from teacher and hope to continue in next years. Gazette did article on this – passing out to members.

Reflective device program – first months results**Jeff Dunckel**

We had \$25,000 budget for educational materials – we are piloting at 3 locations – COB, EOB and Rockville Library. We are tracking distribution of reflective wrist snaps and zipper pulls placed at each of these locations. We are currently in pilot mode and hope to come up with program cost.

StreetSmart advertising

We also started outreach program – street smart advertising –on bus shelters in Spanish and English – Dunckel passed out samples – we also have on some buses we hope this is an attention getter. Pogue – This is a part of the regional street smart campaign –we contribute some funds so want to get our money out of it.

Arcola Pedestrian Protection Project /

Fred and Dunckel have been engaged in projects that have made a difference –narrow Connecticut Ave road and did some work on Arcola – there are things we are doing and learn from these experiences and do more. Arcola Avenue – article in gazette and project description in package. We are leader in this area in these improvements. Arcola is well underway – concrete done will do resurfacing and hope to have entire road resurface, striped and signage by end of July. We did similar treatment on Connecticut Avenue – speed reduction and education of double jeopardy of crossing two lanes without having somewhere to safely stand.

Ben Stutz – need to have lists or displays on this type of projects on the website so people can get a sense of what has happened and what is planned for future. To connect the dollar amounts to show that more tangible work is being done. For Council its an easy way for Council to explain to residents what has been completed.

Presentation of Bus Stop Ped Safety Improvements

Jeff Dunckel showed slides of before and after photos of work done when he was working with Transit.

Next Meeting: **September 16, 2008**

Remaining 2008 Meeting Dates: **November 18, 2008**